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FM AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUJUMBURA 000627

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/16/2019  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [BY](#)  
SUBJECT: FRODEBU YOUTH ARE TALKING TOUGH - HOW FAR WILL  
THEY TAKE IT?

REF: A. BUJUMBURA 439  
[1](#)B. BUJUMBURA 488

Classified By: CDA Anthony Kleiber for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Patrick Nkurunziza, president of the FRODEBU party's youth wing, stated that the group's primary objective is to "protect the party" by acting as a "deterrent" against the intimidation efforts of the ruling party's youth, the Imbonerakure (ref A). To fulfill these goals, FRODEBU's Central des Jeunes Democratiques (CJD - Gathering of Young Democrats) is organizing rallies called "sports days," a strategy intentionally copied directly from CNDD-FDD's Imbonerakure methods. Unlike CNDD-FDD's youth, however, the CJD is also making strong public statements promising to go head-to-head with the Imbonerakure until the CNDD-FDD youth back off of their rumored thug-like ways. Since the Imbonerakure are said to be forming armed militias in some communes, there is a fear that FRODEBU's youth will pursue an equivalent response. Most political observers, however, believe the CJD rhetoric is empty of real threat; they lack the resources and probably the will to pursue an armed response. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) In Patrick Nkurunziza's November 17 meeting with PolOff, he delivered a blunt, clear message on the CJD's commitment to protecting the FRODEBU party and following FRODEBU marching orders. To questions about the organization's agenda, election preparations, or purpose, he consistently and concisely responded that it depends on the party leadership's instructions. "If the party says march, we march." He defined the youth wing as a "response" to CNDD-FDD's Imbonerakure: "we are afraid of the Imbonerakure and exist for that reason." When pressed, he described CJD's members: 18 - 35 years old, single or married, male or female. Though he said CJD's total membership is unknown, Patrick expressed confidence that the youth wing is represented in every commune of all of Burundi's 17 provinces.

[1](#)3. (C) For months, Imbonerakure groups have organized an estimated 300 or more people to jog en masse through cities and communes chanting slogans. According to some reports, the cadences are quite hostile, including serious threats to those who support opposition parties. CJD claims its "sports days" are in response to these Imbonerakure events. Patrick said that CJD is drawing an estimated 250 youth at each gathering and promised to continue organizing these counter-demonstrations "of force" until the Imbonerakure stop their activities. (Note: It is common throughout Burundi for people to go on long jogs or walks in very large groups on Saturday and Sunday mornings. The jogging groups with cadences and shouting are not always political. Rather the tradition is now being used for political posturing and propaganda. End note.)

¶4. (C) Patrick Nkurunziza informed PolOff that he and the FRODEBU party are concerned that violence is coming, but not from any other youth groups - only the Imbonerakure. Patrick elaborated that if "the government" does not rein in the Imbonerakure, there will certainly be violence. He emphasized, however, that CJD is different than CNDD-FDD's youth; it will make a show through sports but will not resort to violence. More to the point, he stated that FRODEBU is against violence. When asked to explain that statement against FRODEBU's presidential candidate Domitien Ndayizeye or FRODEBU vice-president Frederic Banvuginyunvira's comments to the press that FRODEBU will continue down this path as long as the ruling CNDD-FDD party does, Patrick replied that he and the CJD will obey the party. He concluded with a request that the USG press the GoB to stop the Imbonerakure.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: There are real concerns among the international community and political parties that these youth groups will push at each other, slowly escalating the rhetoric, then the confrontations, until real violence breaks out. While other parties also have youth wings, it is FRODEBU's CJD that is the most verbally antagonistic and that is now physically challenging the Imbonerakure with its own large, aggressive gatherings. Despite this, and despite Patrick Nkurunziza's assertive statements, political observers believe that FRODEBU does not have the resources or the will to pursue this course all the way to a violent confrontation -- that this is a game of chicken that FRODEBU has undertaken to try to halt the Imbonerakure's aggression. Unfortunately, these political observers are not saying the same of CNDD-FDD. Many fear that the Imbonerakure will take up small arms in support of CNDD-FDD before this election season is over. END COMMENT.

Kleiber